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SOCIAL IDEALS IMPLIED IN PRESENT AMERICAN PROGRAMS OF VOLUNTARY PHILANTHROPY¹

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Programs of voluntary philanthropy deal with no exclusive or distinctive problems to which religion and statesmanship are strangers. If it has a distinct field, it is rather in the stage at which the problems are attacked than in their essential character. Speaking very generally it may be said that in America initiative and experiment and educational propaganda belong to voluntary philanthropy, while control, and the enforcement of standards, and the meeting of large elementary recognized social needs fall to the state. Even when the state inaugurates frankly experimental schemes, these have usually been devised and tried out to some extent as voluntary enterprises; and governmental bureaus of research and publicity are most easily developed in fields which are not experimental, controversial, or doubtful but rather obvious, fundamental, and thoroughly understood.

Programs of voluntary philanthropy are as numerous, diverse, and complex as are the minds of philanthropists and the needs of suffering humanity. Socialism itself might be claimed as such a program. Large sums of money are voluntarily contributed every year and an enormous amount of human energy expended for no other purpose than to propagate its ideas; to rescue the exploited from what are represented to be the hardships of the capitalistic régime. It is a strange commentary upon the materialistic interpretation of history that socialists conceive it to be necessary to make such sacrifices and to put forth such herculean efforts to achieve an end which the economic forces alone have any potency to achieve, an end which no conscious human planning can either insure or avert. By the policies which they pursue, socialists avow themselves not to be really fatalists, or materialists, or determinists,

¹ From the Proceedings of the American Sociological Society.

but nothing else in effect than philanthropists, working according to their light, and certainly according to their strength, for changes which they conceive to be beneficial to mankind.

However, I presume that neither the socialists nor the sociologists who planned this program will thank me to give any such extension to the definition of philanthropy as to include revolutionary propaganda. What you have had in mind is rather the relief of the oppressed and suffering and the improvement of conditions within the existing industrial and social order. We encounter first, then, those programs which have to do with making governmental action more effective, or extending its sphere. Bureaus of municipal research, state charities, aid associations, associations for labor legislation, tenement house committees, child labor committees, public education associations, public health associations, and numerous other similar agencies are founded mainly for the purpose of influencing governmental action, either directly, or through the development of public opinion. Workers in enterprises of this kind are sometimes almost as keen as revolutionists themselves to dissociate their activities from philanthropy, or at least to discriminate sharply between their kind of philanthropy which aims to deal with 100 per cent of the problem, that is to say, with all citizens as such, and ordinary philanthropy, which is content to deal with a modest fraction of the problem, helping particular individuals, or modifying for the better particular local conditions. Undoubtedly these numerous national, state, and municipal associations which have governmental action in view are characteristic of modern American philanthropy and they do disclose a common social ideal, an ideal of the state and of human relations. We should not be warranted in describing that ideal as either socialistic or anti-socialistic, as Christian or pagan, as Hamiltonian or Jeffersonian. The distinguishing feature of modern American philanthropy is that it keeps clear of controversial theories of the state and reaches down to a substratum of social concepts, to a foundation of common instincts, traditions, and motives upon which sociological, theological, and political controversies become indifferent, to a provisional and evasive realm, if you like to call it so, where there is a truce to superficial differences, and a recognition of kinship and common purpose.

Perhaps when radical and conservative, Jew, and infidel, and Christian, work together to protect children, or to stamp out contagious disease, or to raise wages, or to secure the introduction of a modern accounting system, or to humanize the administration of the criminal law, they write themselves down as guilty of intellectual inconsistency, or as lacking in a clear perception of the theory of the state on which they should proceed. I prefer to think that they are exhibiting a higher kind of consistency and perception, that they are obeying a true social instinct, that they are helping to shape for themselves and for their, perhaps, more pugnacious contemporaries a more adequate ideal of the state, one more consonant with the social ideal which our conditions require.

What is implied in regard to the state in all these programs which look toward better government as a prime means of securing social welfare reform is not paternalism, but the deliberate intention to use the governmental machinery for the doing of those things for which experience shows it to be more efficient and more economical than any other means yet devised. Neither to be alarmed by the growth of state action, nor obsessed by the desire to increase it for its own sake, is the frame of mind of workers in modern philanthropy. The state is looked upon as a social institution, not as a friendly or as a hostile power with independent personality, but as a very vital part of ourselves, as an extension of our will, our conscience, and our strong right arm, as a tool to work with, but none the less as a subtle, delicate, and somewhat mysterious inheritance, stronger because no man can fully understand it and no small group of men long bend it to selfish or sinister purposes, less strong than it might be if we had more respect for it and understood better the laws of its operations. The ideal of the state implied in these programs to which I refer is that of adults and not of children; of equals and not of tyrants or slaves; of physically able-bodied men, sound of mind—not of neurasthenics; of educated men rather than of instructed men; of optimistic, good-humored, patient men, not of fatalists or blasé, disillusioned, end-of-the-nineteenth-century philosophers; of economists with a Golden Age ahead, and a present surplus at their disposal; of men with a historical point of view, appreciative of the high services of their

constitution-making, law-creating ancestors, and shrewdly suspecting that among the things which they have inherited is some capacity for taking part on their own account in that same kind of fundamental law-making when the occasion arises.

The ideal of the state implied in these programs involves what we may call the investment theory of taxation. The state is urged to spend money in preventing contagious disease, in strengthening and developing the educational system, in providing factory inspection on the ground that such expenditures will eventually save money now spent for the care of the sick, and for waste social products which would be saved by education for efficiency and by adequate inspection. This is of course not the only argument. Even if it cost more to keep people well, to prevent accidents, and to educate than to care for the sick, the injured, and the inefficient, the former would still be worth while in the economics of philanthropy. But in that case the amount of money available for the purpose might be limited by the financial ability of the taxpayer. In so far as the things to be done represent saving expense instead of increasing it, there is no such outside arbitrary limit. All that is done but opens the way to do more, for it increases resources at each step instead of depleting them. This corresponds, of course, to the genetic conception of capital, as resulting not from saving in the sense of deprivation, but as an incident of serial or capitalistic methods of industry.

These programs for the encouragement and support of state activity imply also a new sense of the close interdependence of the interests of all social classes. They take into account the social effects of the growth of cities, of the increase in congregate dwellings, of the new facilities for educational propaganda, of the advances of science and mechanical invention. They assume the public-school system and boards of health, and factory inspection systems, and the daily press. That all the world is one great neighborhood, and especially that America's hundred million people may learn at the same moment and may fairly well understand what a president is recommending to Congress, what a supreme court is deciding to be the law, what a scientist has discovered, what lives are lost in a factory fire and by what means the bereaved families

are relieved, if at all, from the financial loss attendant upon the disaster, or by some dramatic educational device, such as a great exhibit, or the Christmas seals, what graver losses there are from tuberculosis and how preventable such losses are, if the cost of prevention can be met—all such revolutionary facts have been incorporated into the philosophy of modern philanthropy in such a way as profoundly to modify its programs. Of course, for the sake of brevity, I somewhat exaggerate. There are many things which have not actually been incorporated but the tendency is, I think, clearly to be seen. The ideal is that of a society which is by no means entirely dependent upon the government for meeting its corporate needs, which uses the state increasingly, as I have already said, but uses increasingly also other instruments for executing the social will, which looks upon a voluntary association, a chamber of commerce, a political party, or a newspaper as equally appropriate, within its limits, sometimes very wide limits, for accomplishing any beneficent purpose. Modern voluntary philanthropy as a whole is free from prejudice for or against state action, for or against voluntary action. Herein lies its greatest strength and its unique character. Its social ideal transcends that of political socialism on the one hand and that of the old individualism on the other. The same agencies, the same active workers, and the same financial contributors are to be found at one moment eagerly working for a restrictive law, or for more efficient administration because state action promises good results, and at the next moment for a relief fund, or a voluntary educational propaganda, because that promises good results. They are pragmatists, asking not what is inherently and abstractly the right way of social reform, but what way will cash in. They are positivists, measuring social needs and social remedies on the same scale and refusing to be embarrassed by the thought that one appropriate remedy is unavailable because, requiring state action, it leads toward socialism; or another because, requiring voluntary co-operation, it does not deal at one stroke with 100 per cent of the problem. They examine historical precedents but decline to be discouraged because of historical failures. The social ideal implied in such programs as we have thus far considered is, then, comprehensive, free from that artificial simplicity which

is gained by ignoring some of the elements of the situation, but nevertheless definite in that it takes affirmatively into account all kinds of social resources. Religion, business, and government are all tributary to its campaigns. The appeal of social work is a religious appeal. Philanthropic investment, or, rather, ordinary business investment controlled by a social spirit, is one of its most constant resources for dealing with certain kinds of exploitation and hardship. Legislation and administration are in the forefront of its programs though they do not fill the whole horizon. Its watchwords are five: (1) *social responsibility*, (2) *the utilization of social surplus* to the common advantage, (3) *the removal of obstacles* to individual efficiency and prosperity, (4) *the free and willing assumption by society* of the whole financial burden heretofore imposed by progress upon the *weaker members of society*, and (5) reasonable social control of those who for either biological or economic reasons have to be eliminated from ordinary industrial competition and social relations.

A second phenomenon characteristic of modern American philanthropy is the establishment of foundations for the study and improvement of social conditions. These may be separately incorporated and endowed, as in the case of the Russell Sage Foundation and the General Education Board; or grouped under a single financial corporate management, as in the case of the various Carnegie endowments; or associated with some educational or religious or philanthropic institution, as in the case of the Croker bequest to Columbia University for research into the causes and cure of cancer. The task of the social psychologist who would undertake to say just what social ideals are implied in these foundations is a delicate and difficult one for the reason that in the comparatively small group of founders there is naturally a relatively large personal factor which it would perhaps be safer to analyze in the manner of the more conservative national biographies, after the heroes have passed from the stage of action.

Still the programs of these foundations do disclose some elements in common of a social ideal which we can perhaps keep distinct from questions of individual characteristics. They are, on the whole, not unnaturally, more conservative than the groups of associations,

committees, and bureaus of which we have been speaking. Both donors and trustees of such foundations have an average age considerably above that of the whole population, and even above that of the directors and active workers in the first group of agencies. Except, perhaps, as to the public schools, and with other occasional exceptions, these foundations concern themselves less with state activities, and affiliate more naturally with the established voluntary institutions, such as colleges and universities, hospitals and orphan asylums, churches and relief societies. They are sometimes experimental, explanatory, and occasionally strikingly original; but, as a rule, they support accepted ideas and traditional methods rather than untried theories and bold innovations. This is not said in any spirit of hostile criticism. It is very desirable that tried and accepted ideas should have support from those who believe in them. That great foundations which can come only from great wealth should represent the ideals of the previous generation rather than of the next generation is what must be expected; and that they should represent the ideals of mature age and of vested interests is equally inevitable. What this means at the present time in this country is that their natural attitude toward state action for the social welfare is one of distrust, or at least of hesitation about greatly enlarging its functions. The disposition would be and is to examine the constitution and court decisions and to consult our conservative political traditions in determining whether a particular result should be sought through state or voluntary action, rather than to decide the question exclusively upon its merits; and these tendencies are clearly enough reflected in the actual programs of the foundations. Scientific research, popular education in hygiene, in agricultural methods, etc., pensions to college teachers, endowments for approved colleges, the standardizing of the work of charity organization societies are typical and most praiseworthy features of the programs of foundations inspired by such ideals. There is implied in such programs a high sense of personal responsibility, a deep concern as to the stewardship which great wealth involves, sometimes even an obvious embarrassment in finding some way of using the accumulated wealth so as to be certain to help and not injure. Perhaps there may be some failure

to recognize the full value of democratic co-operation, some reluctance to trust the future to the extent to which on the whole the future has generally shown itself, when it becomes the present, and still more when it becomes the past, to have been worthy to be trusted. Perhaps there is some failure to realize the extent to which chaotic industry itself and social neglect are responsible for the evils with which the foundations would deal. Perhaps the foundations on the whole, as compared with the more informal, more spontaneous, and more precariously supported voluntary agencies, are open to the danger of seeking to exercise control beyond the legitimate boundaries implied in their benefactions, as when a foundation for pensioning college teachers seeks to eradicate sectarian control of colleges. Nevertheless the social ideal which they represent is one that we could ill afford to spare. They do represent the socialization of wealth in process. They are not intended to be merely, I am almost inclined to say not at all, a form of insurance against more radical social reforms. Founders and the trustees of foundations may have their views on current issues of "social and industrial justice," but there is no evidence which I can discover of an expectation that their gifts will greatly retard or deflect the onward movement for the destruction of privilege and exploitation. They do what they are doing, so far as I can see, from what Mrs. Harriman calls the spirit of charity and philanthropy, "loving one's neighbor as oneself," "doing one's utmost to insure equal opportunity for all to become efficient." True, Mrs. Harriman has not herself as yet endowed any such great foundation as those of which I have been speaking; but, as she has sanctioned the publication of a book on modern philanthropy, in which "valuable lessons and suggestions" are drawn by Dr. Allen with her approval and commendation, in the preface of which she asserts roundly that man's individual gifts must be used systematically as well as sympathetically to be successful in their mission of benefiting himself, his country, and his race, we may confidently count her among the prospective founders of benefactions proportionate to her "gifts material," and we may assume that the social ideal which she expresses is in some measure representative. In one respect, however, the brief preface from which I have quoted is

sharply differentiated from the tendencies which I have attributed to foundations in general, as it puts forth the distinct proposition that "united individual efforts should be concentrated upon making efficient government everywhere." We may therefore expect that any institutions which Mrs. Harriman may create or support will belong primarily to the Bureau of Municipal Research type of philanthropy, rather than, say, to the type of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

We have third to consider these philanthropic agencies which our generation has inherited, such as hospitals, relief societies, orphan asylums, and the like. It might naturally be expected that these institutions, having come to us from Colonial times, from Europe, or even from the far-off cradle of the Aryan race, corresponding to some of the most fundamental and universal instincts of humanity, would exhibit comparatively little influence of modern social ideals. This, however, is not the case. No less than the foundations, and scarcely less than the committees for the prevention of tuberculosis or for the promotion of sex hygiene, these venerable philanthropic institutions are responding to the new influences, and expressing in brick and mortar, in location and management, in technique and in results, the prevailing social ideas.

We see first an extraordinary broadening of their program to include the social causes of poverty, sickness, and crime, in addition to their traditional task of caring for individuals. The charity organization society has its department for the improvement of social conditions. The hospital has its social service department. Even the prison has its parole system; and the voluntary agencies which deal with the criminal extend their interest to the school system, even to prenatal influences and the control of heredity, to the administration of the criminal law, to the sanitary conditions in prison, to the occupations of prisoners, and eventually to the whole industrial and social complex.

These established voluntary agencies, in the next place, have come largely into the hands of experts who have had more or less direct professional training for their several functions. The merit system of appointments and promotion in the public service has its analogy in the preference now given in voluntary agencies to those

who besides ordinary physical and moral qualifications can give some evidence of having studied the specific problems involved, of having had training for the work to be done. This extension of scope to include social aspects of the problem, this trained service, and a new and refreshing spirit of co-operation have together transformed the programs of voluntary philanthropy, even as embodied in the oldest agencies, almost beyond recognition. These newer programs of the old institutions imply social ideals similar to those already attributed to the newer associations which are more directly concerned with state activities. Not that they co-operate to any great extent necessarily directly with the state, although in fact many of them do. Their aim, however, at their best, is everywhere prevention rather than cure, or at least equally with cure; rehabilitation of the individual, and the co-ordination of social service. Their ideal is constantly more social; more democratic; more inclusive, freer from racial sectarian limitations; more scientific in that it conceives even the waste places of human society to be subject to moral order, even the philanthropic obligations of individuals to be capable of formulation.

If we look upon charity organization as the most familiar, the most highly developed, and most clearly formulated concept of voluntary philanthropy, we may profitably inquire, finally, what the ideal of organized charity precisely is—whether it is destructive, capable of differentiation from other current and perhaps more popular ideals. What charity organization stands for specifically is intensive, discriminating, thorough, and sympathetic consideration of the individual man, woman, or child, of the particular family which for any reason fails to be self-supporting and self-sufficient. Organized charity instinctively distrusts large general relief schemes, whether public or voluntary. Public outdoor relief, emergency relief funds, widows' pensions, minimum-wage boards, social insurance, old-age pensions, the feeding of school children at public expense, and all such wholesale handling of relief problems are foreign to its spirit. Organized charity may have to deal with such relief schemes as *de facto* resources for the relief of individuals in whom it is interested, as existing portions of the social environment which, not being able to eliminate, it must seek to modify so far as

possible in the direction of its own ideal; but this task is not undertaken *con amore*, and, left to itself, organized charity would depend, even in the complex conditions of modern urban society, as Thomas Chalmers depended in Glasgow upon the invisible relief fund, upon the natural and spontaneous resources which lie in ordinary family and neighborhood relationships, rather than upon artificially created devices. Like Chalmers, organized charity of today, when unadulterated, fears the gift-bearing types of social legislation, fears the pauperizing effects of precollected relief funds, and prefers to work on what is known as the case-by-case system, discovering first of all what is needed, and then getting the money, or the job, or the advice, or the discipline, or whatever it may be that will meet the need.

Organized charity has scarcely as yet formulated a comprehensive social program based upon this notion of concentrating attention upon the individual and the individual family, and bringing to bear all the resources of the community co-operating freely but intelligently on the basis of ascertained facts for the specific purpose of removing the handicaps, increasing efficiency, or as a last resource supplying adequate relief if there is found to be a permanent deficiency of earning power. Such a program will imply a survey of physical, educational, and ultimately of all social needs. It will require far larger resources than organized charity has ever had or possibly ever will have at its disposal—resources, financial and personal, resources of imagination, of constructive statesmanship, of persuasion, and of that persistence which Professor Patten named yesterday as the predominant characteristic of the evolutionary point of view.

And yet the charity organization idea does have extraordinary staying power. Not being dependent upon the outcome of a political campaign, or upon an endowed foundation, it defies unpopularity and misrepresentation, it makes its way by sheer force of its reasonableness, by its scientific quality. What it will mean when, with braver apostles and with ampler resources, organized charity makes bold to formulate its social program is that all who lag behind will be helped according to their needs by all according to their powers. No dependent classes will be compulsorily

created or officially recognized, whether pensioned classes, or insured classes, or relieved classes; but each man will stand on his own feet, a man made efficient by the application of rational, individualized remedies, a man in whom relatives and neighbors, employer and fellow-workman, inspector and teacher, and if necessary physician, and probation officer, and judge are interested—personally and professionally interested—to render such specific appropriate service as his needs may require. It is not true, in America at any rate, that the ideal of an independent citizen of an industrial democracy, earning his own living, providing for his own emergencies, and relying for support even in old age on the accumulated savings of his productive period, has wholly disappeared, as it is said to have disappeared in England. If the day comes when the farmer and the skilled mechanic lose this conception, organized charity will represent it still as the inspiration of its small, unheroic and commonplace, but persistent, evolutionary task.

Whether these varying ideals of the diverse programs of modern philanthropy can be reconciled, whether this ideal of organized charity can be superimposed upon an ideal of minimum compulsory standards—that is another problem, which even the most liberal interpretation of our present topic does not warrant one attempting at this time to solve.